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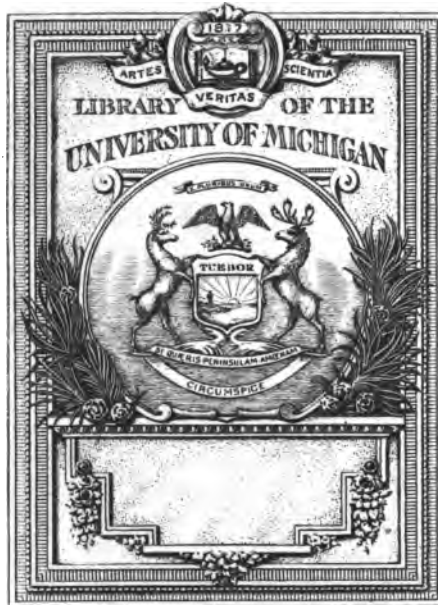
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Fetish Worship in the Fine Arts

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1885

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DEDICATED
TO
MADAME GABRIELLE HÉBERT
AS A MARK OF
SINCERE FRIENDSHIP AND ESTEEM
BY
THE AUTHOR

PREFACE

IN pointing to what I believe to be false,
I hope I am not oblivious of what is
sterling and true.

THE AUTHOR.

January 1885.

Fetish Worship in the Fine Arts



ARCHITECTURE



IN front of the Granville Hotel, Ramsgate,
sometimes called St Lawrence-on-Sea, stands
a marble bust :—

IN MEMORY OF
EDWARD WELBY PUGIN
THE GIFTED AND ACCOMPLISHED SON OF
AUGUSTUS WELBY PUGIN
ONE OF ENGLAND'S GREATEST ARCHITECTS, ETC., ETC.

Then the father was the great architect and
the bust is in memory of the son, the gifted

and accomplished. He built the Granville Hotel, or rather a series of small pokey adjoining dwelling-houses, that were subsequently pinned together, ornamented with a few atrocious lions' heads and dubbed the Granville Hotel. This was presumably in honour of the Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports, Lord Granville, with whose crest or coat of arms the heraldic lions probably have something to do. Those who are in the habit of drawing fanciful deductions from Darwin's writings, might almost go so far as to pretend that the peculiar construction of Lord Granville's features may have some connection with those wide-mouthed lions. But that is neither here nor there, Edward Welby Pugin built the so-called Granville Hotel, and probably somebody

else defaced it with those most hideous lions. If we compare the front façade of the Granville Hotel with similar rows of houses, we are bound to admit that Edward Welby Pugin was a man of taste, and as such, in a country where taste—particularly in architectural matters—is still in its infancy he deserved public recognition; even if it taketh the shape of a marble bust, grinned at from the four points of the compass by four lions rampant in their ugliness. But how about his father? ‘One of England’s greatest architects.’ What is the meaning of this? It is true we are in the country of Christopher Wren and Inigo Jones; but we are also in the country of Shakespeare, and yet would one of England’s greatest dramatists mean

those of the present day—Lord Tennyson, Mr Gilbert, and the glorious host of foreign adapters included? To speak plainly, is the meaning analagous to being one of Belgium's greatest strategists, or one of England's greatest warriors? For apart from such reflections, England is greater in the drama—if only in the past—than she is ever likely to be in architecture. Or do we call architecture the many anomalous white elephants that remind us of limitless expenditure and inadequacy of result? Or do we sum up our architectural laurels, by contemplating the few certainly splendid examples of Grecian style that serve only to remind us how totally unsuited they are to our temperament and our climate? Or perhaps those numerous

dreadful classical bits of stucco that stare us in the face, as town halls, lecture halls, chapels, etc., in almost every part of England? Or do we call our dwelling houses samples of even the most passable architecture? Or perhaps our marine residences, remnants and reminders of England's lowest artistic ebb? Or the buildings that go to make up our fashionable watering places, the terraces, parades, and esplanades, with aristocratic names and tumble-down balconies and verandahs, with pillars of stucco, monuments of stucco; in fact, *toute la boutique*, tossed together a product of unadulterated rubbish. As a people, we are noted for our 'thoroughness': is it perhaps only an instance of the 'extremes' we are also noted for, that so much of our

building is thoroughly rotten? that we employ the best workmen in the world, to produce the greatest rubbish? If we wish to be candid, we must admit that the foregoing references are not enough to give a noble meaning to the qualification of being one of England's greatest architects. . The fact is, as a nation we hardly knew up till quite recently, in what rational architecture consisted. We are in the very birth throes even now of trying to understand what it means, what it aims at. The very best that can be said is, that there is hope for us ; and lately hope has so far shown itself to be justified, for we have jumped out of the vacancy of the immediate past into the diseased worship of one of the poorest styles of bygone days—the so-called Queen Anne's style.

But before proceeding to criticise our architectural vagaries in detail, let me draw attention to the seeming unfairness of sweeping assertions and condemnation of our taste in these matters—for it is only an apparent injustice after all. For, whereas we should be thoroughly justified in asserting our dramatic tastes are degraded when we are once agreed that the average of our theatres is beneath contempt. Many would point to our beautiful country-seats and private mansions as a proof that we as a nation are possessed of excellent taste in architecture. But there is this difference between the drama and the latter. To make a high-class theatre pay a public is required; a public not only that appreciates what is good, but by so doing tends to pro-

mulgate its appreciation among the community at large. Now, it would take many beautiful structures to influence the public taste in architecture. Besides most of our *chefs d'œuvre* are hidden from public appreciation in parks and other enclosures far removed from our centres of population. They need be and mostly are but the result of individual cultivated taste which is cosmopolitan. There is nothing to prevent individual educated taste employing a good architect, and, with all that limitless money can command, engaging the services of the best designers of any country and erecting in our midst, monuments of most perfect architectural taste. But this is, I contend, a matter in its sources and its influences entirely independent of our public taste,

and in no way invalidates criticisms thereon. Let us take a glance at our public buildings. It would be hardly fair to hold us accountable for the monstrosities in dirt and stucco, which owe their existence to the beginning of this century; but what are we to say to our present employment of the Gothic style for instance, which is hardly the monopoly of any age! We are certainly answerable for misinterpreting its capacities and uses. To employ it in cases where light and space are prime considerations, like in our new Law Courts, was an idea for which our want of the sense of the fitness of things must be held responsible. A style like the Gothic, the proper application of which in our time is only conceivable when employed for places of worship, we turn to utilitarian uses; it

perfect
hidden.

almost reminds us of the practical utilitarian subtleties of our written creed.

Our meretricious use of colonnades and pillars as projections, is another instance of a false artistic instinct. We seem to forget entirely that whilst such absorbers of light may be fit and proper under a sunny Grecian sky, they are ridiculous in a climate where there is so little sunlight.

Then again, many of our latest public edifices are glaringly overloaded with ornament: witness the Albert Hall. Some are even worse, spoilt by restless colour contrasts, or again overloaded with colour and stucco ornament combined; although where the one is used the other ought to be very sparingly employed. It is true we see both colour and ornament in gorgeous

harmony in Italy: witness San Marco, Venice. But what a southern imagination created for a sunny southern climate does not bear imitating in our latitudes. Nor can we find permanent salvation in any kind of slavish imitation of foreign styles; Englishmen should strive to cultivate a style of building not only suitable to, but directly an outcome and reflex of their character and conditions of life. Now that is just what we have not got at present, although we may be said to have had something of the sort in days long gone by.

Many of our best buildings suffer from the disadvantage that they were never perspectively suited to the site on which they stand. Many of them would be entitled to two or three times as much

free space around them as they have at present, if anything like an idea of their importance were to be gained. This we see most distressingly evidenced by the British Museum, St Paul's Cathedral, and above all by our new Law Courts. But even if once sufficient space were given to admit of a comprehensive view of the buildings themselves, still if they form part of a street, the greatest moderation in ornament and projections is among the first canons of good taste. We have in our midst a singular verification of the truth of this contention—namely, Somerset House. The architect of that building evidently knew his business; for whilst ornamenting and richly profiling the front towards the Thames, he kept

the side in the Strand perfectly plain. As long as an architectural structure is but a continuation of others, it is the worst possible taste to treat it as if it stood projecting detached by itself; it must flatten off as part of a whole. If our monitors of taste would only take the trouble, or perhaps better still, if they were educated up to the point to try what sympathetic effects can be attained by the simple harmony of architectural proportions in their entirety and in their structural details, they would not be long in discarding once and for all the whole *pot-pourri* of little bits of ornamentation of all styles, from all ages, which thrown together like by accident, have come down upon us gradually, only to confound us.

As things are at present, as often as not the effect of one ornament neutralizes the effect of the other. Now, even, if in the south of Europe, architects have sinned in a similar way, that is no excuse for us; for whilst with them an over-flowing imagination was the cause, with us everything is done *à froid*, and thus the result is the more distasteful and disastrous. That in the dimensions of the component architectural details, for instance in the summits, cornices, mouldings and flutes, it is often a question of inches, and that every inch more or less is often of far greater importance than the addition of the most complicated ornamentation; all this is, as I have often convinced myself, a closed book even to many architects. If the harmony of

the details among themselves is not attained, then the attempt is made to remedy the defect by adding superfluous ornamentation; hence the origin in many cases of our over-loaded decoration.

The more delicate effects of light, chiaro-scuro, half-shade, shade, and cast shadow, are possible upon a comparatively flat surface. This is not generally understood; the nice perception for divisions, which ought to be one of the first qualifications of architects, is mostly wanting. Our buildings are almost without exception too heavy in the top parts, and without any perspective in the ornamentation whatever. To see balconies growing out of second floors, for the existence of which the lower floors do not give the shadow of a justifi-

cation, is no rarity. So much for the details of architectural construction; but in the present time we distinguish ourselves by the erection of single houses uniting each in itself a *pot-pourri* of every imaginable architectural style: Gothic windows below, and balconies in Renaissance topped by Byzantine summits. All this is nothing unusual, and perhaps only the natural revulsion from our former practice of building a hundred houses in a row, one like another, of no architectural pretensions whatever. When our stylists by chance determine to remain purists, we not only see them, as before stated, mistake the style that might be suited to the end in view, but do so in so outrageous a manner, as we behold in the new Law Courts, with

their darkness, clumsiness, and want of ventilation, the whole of course at a hideous cost.

Turning to our average dwelling-houses :

In a country so thickly populated as our own, and where the conditions under which land property for building purposes comes into the market are so peculiar, it is only in the nature of things that we should be under exceptional disadvantages for building solid serviceable dwellings. Helplessness on the one side and an inordinate striving for immediate gain on the other, combine to make the attainment of a desirable result well-nigh impossible. Namely, the result of a house not only being well built in itself, but besides, partly at least the expression of the taste, wants and position of the occupier. The consequence is, that our

dwelling houses, with few exceptions which belong to the wealthy classes, are devoid of any individual character. The meaningless appearance of whole streets of house frontages is one of the causes of the depressing feeling that overcomes us in the less frequented streets of our large towns, even though we be accustomed to their merciless monotony by a residence of many years in their midst. Our system of building houses with frontages of two windows, naturally limits the scope of the architect to produce anything out of the common. Still, with a little common-sense, it would be possible to avoid many sins against good taste that are perpetrated daily. In the first place, it would be easy to dispense with tawdry outward ornament,

which is out of harmony with the moderate requirements of the interior of the building. Secondly, rows of houses that belong to one and the same proprietor might be grouped in a style to give an effective and characteristic frontage so as to hide a tiresome uniformity. This has been attempted lately in rare instances with great success; but notably in Vienna and Berlin striking architectural effects have been produced in this manner. Thirdly, the insipid flatness with which our windows are fixed—a *fleur de tête*—is one of those inveterate vices that spoil every architectural effect. Large windows receding from the profile of the building give a house a substantial appearance, are less exposed to wind and weather, and permit

of a rich working out of the stone window frame; and for all that admit, if of proper size, as much light and sun as are ever called for. Fourthly, the foolish custom of not giving the rooms sufficient height, is the cause of the stunted aspect of the façade of a house. Now as the height of the ground floor and the first floor are reduced to a minimum, it is impossible to make the second floor lower, and thus the whole building produces the effect of an incomplete rigmarole, in contrast to which the most humble Westphalian peasant's dwelling looks dignified, characteristic and desirable. It would be a treat now and then to get a sight of some honest building material such as strong rafters, beams,

bricks, or iron. But it is perhaps on account of the damp climate, and because the skeleton cannot show itself for mere decency's sake, that we have to be satisfied with stucco and plaster, or other rubbish which is produced by the ton, and only calculated to rejoice the heart of the wholesale builder, and prepare an everlasting source of annoyance and expense to the gullible and helpless tenant.

Still there can be no doubt we are getting civilised at least in a practical sense, for lately we have been gradually coming to recognize that living in a conveniently built flat—even of no architectural pretensions—is better than living in an inconvenient and besides badly built house.* For, even

* Most of our dwelling-houses are built as if one of the main

though the flats our speculative builders are running up cannot compare in solidity, let alone in taste, with similar structures either in France, Belgium or Germany, we still must greet them as an improvement, and under our dreadful lease system rest thankful for small mercies.

As we were converted to Protestantism by act of Parliament, so we fancy coming out of the darkness of night, we can suddenly cultivate the sense of the beautiful and practical by blindly adopting principles we do not understand, and placing ourselves unreservedly in the hands of jerry builders, enterprising upholsterers, and bona-fide crazy art enthusiasts. That

objects in view were to let the cold in during the winter and the heat during the summer.

they have done some good is only another way of saying it was impossible to do harm. That even the poor stuff they have offered us should have met with such general recognition and acceptance is proof all the more of the total darkness we were in. A darkness indeed that could make us take a miserable pittance of ugly coloured light as a boon, a revelation. But as we are earnest and thorough, or nothing, in our crazes, so we set to work surrounding ourselves with sunflowers and pots and pans of every imaginable character, in order to attain from outward influences—without any root in ourselves—a transformation which only a thorough revolution in our

education and entire social system could bring about gradually and naturally.

And yet there have been other influences at work to cultivate our tastes than mercenary or crazy ones; for instance, the different schools of art all over the country, and notably the South Kensington Museum. And it must be admitted that they have done much for our progress in industrial art, as witnessed by the advance in taste all along the line of our manufacturing industry. Still we are not justified in confounding this desirable result with progress in art itself, in its broader and grander sense; though we may hope it will ultimately lead to a higher art standard of our people; a consummation which up to the present, however, remains a pious

wish. But Rome was not built in a day, and it took a good many days ere the Kensington Museum and its aims were emancipated in public opinion from the ridicule a section thereof sought to cast on it and its creators: the late Prince Consort and Sir Henry Cole.

Our national cant wanted no new-fangled continental ideas of encouraging the cultivation of the beautiful from above; we expected it perhaps to come to us from the dirt below, by the unchecked operation of the law of the survival of the 'strongest' which we prefer to call the 'best,' the 'fittest.' However, we have grudgingly and gradually come to recognize the benefits of extending the chances of artistic improvement to sections of the

with
English

community, our ruling classes hitherto held to be beneath or unworthy of their attention. A social stratum the amelioration of which was the earnest desire of one, our aristocracy had only been too prone to revile as even narrower than itself in sympathies. Yes, we are waking up to the belief that it is not absolutely a necessary religious canon, that our houses, our palaces, and our public buildings, should vie with some of our faces in dull monotony and vacancy of expression. People are beginning to understand, that it is not exactly necessary to be a 'lying' Irishman in order to have the expressive eyes of that gifted race; nor is it necessary to be an 'unclean' foreigner, in order to display a fierce moustache and shaggy beard. But all this

is neither here nor there. The gist of the matter is, we are gradually becoming alive to the fact, that we have much to learn in the way of architecture as well as in other branches of the fine arts, and that is a great and most promising step in advance of the state of things of a generation ago. It is promising, even in the face of the manner we go to work to attain a desirable result. For in reference to architecture, we must not forget that we are under especial disadvantages under our cruel working lease-hold system, which makes it our interest to run up shells to fall to pieces of themselves, before the expiration of the lease. For inspiration and prototypes however, I am afraid we must sometimes still turn to those benighted foreigners, who do not close their public-

houses on the Sabbath only to wallow in the gutter on a Saturday night (or, as in Scotland, consume their 'spirits' in their private houses with the blinds down); these foreigners who, whatever their failings, do not preach the ascetic doctrine of poverty being agreeable in the eyes of God quite so fervently as we do. Whilst at the same time we make poverty more hideous than any nightmare elsewhere; not merely a misfortune, but almost a crime. But with our draconic laws for the protection of property partly administered by an unpaid social oligarchy (whilst offences against the person are treated with a leniency unknown elsewhere) we are quite in an exceptional position for inculcating and promulgating the cultivation of the beautiful. But

enough of unsavoury comparisons, let us turn to other branches of the Fine Arts. The Fine Arts so called—for in our time the definition of what they constitute is unfortunately jumbled up with visions of photographers, German music masters, brass bands, and what not.

THE DRAMA

Looking at the present state of the stage, it is indeed difficult to realize that England was the cradle of the stage of modern times; that nearly three centuries ago the continent was frequented by troupes of English strolling players, who were, according to the somewhat sporadic accounts that have come down to us,

more or less noted for their histrionic abilities. These men might not come up to our ideal standard of to-day; still the fact of their having thriven is a proof, more or less, of their having been possessed of certain dramatic training, above the average in the countries they visited.

Now, if we could fancy a man of critical acumen mentally wrapped up in England's dramatic past and unconscious of her present decline, and let him make a round of the London theatres of to-day, I fear we should gather a queer verdict from him as the result. As it is, for those who have some idea of the past and are consequently disgusted with the present, there is but one reflection—namely, that of the mutability of all human things. For England that

boasts of a Shakespeare, a Ben Jonson, a Goldsmith, a Sheridan, and a host of lesser luminaries—not to mention the almost classical list of their stage interpreters—has come down smiling and grinning to its present dramatic decline. A decline, a declension, an eclipse, the measurement of which is far beyond the scope of these pages, although a few facts and deductions therefrom may not be out of place.

One of the causes of the low ebb of our dramatic literature as compared to other countries, (for I have never heard anybody dispute the state of the dramatic tide) is the time honoured aversion of our clergy against the stage.* That shrewd body has, ever since

* As a set off against the past, we have even bishops patronising Mr Irving to-day—another instance of that wondrous tendency for cranky extremes ever paramount with us.

Puritan times, seen a rival, and a dangerous one too, in the drama. Hence the drama has been long subject to a process of clerical mud-casting, and in no country is mud once deftly thrown—particularly the mud of misinterpretation—so tenacious in sticking, so difficult to wash away as in our own. Hence not only our dramatic authors, but their stage interpreters have long been under special disadvantages from this one cause alone; and that would sufficiently explain the narrow circle within which the drama has been allowed to evolve, if to evolve at all. But there have been other causes too, that have worked in league with clerical intolerance to keep us in dramatic barbarism. How could we produce strong writers for the stage when they are placed

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under undue intellectual restrictions, and are forced to portray life as a canting sham? That there is plenty of dramatic genius in our race, our splendid array of novel writers goes to prove. And yet the stage might touch the people more and be a more potent agent of true culture than any prose narrative; not to mention the pulpit, the masses do not go to listen to. Goethe places the influence of the stage far above any other form of literature, and only lately we hear from Italy of proposals for subventionising the theatres in large towns where an increase of brutality and crime has been traced to go hand-in-hand with the closing of theatres.

It is not necessary our play-wrights should ape the truffle hunting propensities of the French dramatic pig, and continually squeak

over the peculiarities of the seventh commandment; but neither is it necessary our dramatic authors should take the stupidity of the head-hiding ostrich as its prototype. But that is not all, our drama has other disadvantages still to contend against. We have no real, healthy, humble and middle-class life to portray, like the Germans or French; both of whose literature abound in excellent plays, treating of every grade of social life, written for all classes, and evincing an honest interest in each. How is it, that our play-wrights cannot produce a play treating of peasant life for instance, like so many in France and Germany, (or even in Russia, *vide* the dramatized novels of Tourgenieff) and relished by all classes alike? Because we have no peasant life, and as for

the middle classes, are they socially and artistically anything but a toadying and tawdry imitation of the aristocracy? Abroad, the exclusiveness of the nobility has been unable to wean the interest of the community from its popular life; English middle-class toadying vulgarity has been more successful; it has even debased what it declined to touch. So our play-wrights are forced to write from, and presume to write for our better classes almost exclusively.

Our Society drama deals with de Veres, Talbots, Fortescues, Montgomerys, both as *premiers sujets*, heroes and heroines; and what make-believes they mostly are! But not content with that, our actors even hide their plebeian origin under aristocratic pseudonyms: the very contrary of Germany,

where the noble-born adopt a common-place *nom de théâtre*. And yet quite recently, even our venerated aristocracy has shown serious signs of decay; for, whilst born to lead at least in matters of fashion, it has evinced an inclination to follow in the wake of vulgar middle-class admiration in art matters. But of these and other peculiarities further on.

How can we imagine a fashionable, or say an average, London audience taking an interest in a comedy, the hero of which might be an apothecary's assistant, or even a humble type of the community? It is not to be thought of, and consequently we are forced to swallow plays of high life described by men who have never had a glimpse of it. For even the *Times*

admitted lately, that literary men in England form a coterie by themselves; they do not mix in society as a rule, only here and there as gushingly venerated lions. Is not then the lack of English dramatists partly to be ascribed to the want of a natural national social life to be portrayed; or to the lack of touch and sympathy between the different classes among each other (always excepting the toadying veneration of the middle-classes for the aristocracy)? And are we not thus driven to take our choice between the mountebankism and jackass's grin in the vain portrayal of the better classes, or to go in headlong for the coarseness of the lower?

To think a piece like 'Ours' could be performed 1200 times! A public that

could stand such a character as Bancroft plays : such a contemptible caricature, without a single redeeming feature to neutralize an intense desire to kick him ! Add to that, a poor creature who comes in, in the last act, having captured a Russian flag ! The only character in the piece who looks and behaves like a gentleman is a Russian, the supposed villain of the play. Surely a public that can swallow such stuff is fit for anything. But we do not stick at trifles ; we are in earnest, we provide the best dressed audiences in Europe to see the worst plays ! But let us turn a moment to the humble interpreters of the drama, for they have now-a-days arrogated to themselves almost the right to be considered first.

It has been pointed out over and over again that the 'star' system, which has at last ruined the Italian opera, would alone ruin our dramatic tastes, if we ever had any. It has done its share fairly and thoroughly already; but our stars have grown more lustrous in the process. Yes, the lower the ebb our stage sinks to, the more important personages our actors seem to become. The lower the level of their intellectual attainments, the greater their arrogance, and the more gushing the drivel of our press monitors. It is often almost epileptic in character. Has it not come to pass only the other day, that the so-called ministerial organ—the newspaper from which we take the cue of our policy in Africa, Asia, and

Europe (luckily in America we have no policy) — devoted a leading article to the subject, whether one of our popular actresses had another such rival actress in mind when treating the British Association to her views on the aims and ambition of her class? To the uninitiated, the alpha and omega of that estimable lady's discourse was, not only that an exclusive society 'ought' to recognise the social standing of actors and actresses, but the notification that it had already taken the hint and done so, and was glad to be allowed to do so. But not content with that, according to an interviewer in one of the London papers in December last, Mrs Kendal has since threatened to read another 'paper!' Roqueplan was once

asked, why do we take so little interest in the Fine Arts? 'Because we take too much interest in the artists themselves,' he replied, and although it sounds like a paradox, it yet contains more than a grain of truth. For it cannot be doubted that the ridiculous amount of attention, not to say curiosity, we devote to artists in general — snatching at the slightest personal details of their daily life—is only too prone to direct our minds towards trifling banalities, and to weaken our receptivity for art in its true greatness and importance.

Lessing said: 'We would prefer to be less exalted by our friends, but more read.' Now, the failing I refer to above is excusable enough—not to say almost human

—when creative genius only is the subject of its working; but with us, when merely reproductive talent, dramatic or musical, often of questionable quality is thus lionised, it is not only inexcusable, but simply vulgar and ridiculous.

Now, it is not so very long ago, that these play actors were officially classed as vagabonds: Shakespeare, Burbage, Garrick, Quin, Foote and others official vagabonds, and yesterday Mr Irving wrote to the press to say he does not desire the honour of knighthood! The success of Mr Wyndham in America, of Sarah Bernhardt in Paris, is read at breakfast by half-a-million sober Britons! Could the irony of fate go further than this? The man whom Carlyle valued more than the possession of British India

a vagabond ; and Mr Irving, soft-sawdered by the *élite* of intellectual London, the Lord Chief-Justice of England presiding ! Oh ! muse of histrionic art, if revenge be sweet, what must thy feelings be ! We heard no more of Shakespeare as a word to conjure with in the land of his birth—that was left for the stolid Germans. His name meant bankruptcy with us up till lately. Instead of that, we hear now that Mr Irving has succeeded in reviving a few plays of Shakespeare and is making them pay. This histrionic genius has banished the word impossible from the actor's dictionary. Mr Irving, who tried our patience with Lord Tennyson's* 'Cup,' condescends to give us

* Mr Irving is said to have the refusal of Lord Tennyson's 'dramatic labours !' The attempt of our laureated bard to be dramatic ! Deplorable blindness after repeated failures, almost

Shakespeare now and then, because Shakespeare alone can afford an ambitious actor certain opportunities of securing immortality on the boards that Mr Wills, Lord Lytton, Tom Taylor and Mr Gilbert hardly are able to secure for him. And we must be thankful that it is so, for to some of us it is better to have Mr Irving's Shakespeare, than no Shakespeare at all. So we get Mr Irving's Shakespeare, and as Mr Irving is above all a shrewd man of business, a keen judge of character, who gauges his time and his contemporaries like few men, he knows what we want, he knows what we may be safely expected to swallow. He gives us velvet cushions, gorgeous scenes, gorgeous trap-

reminding us of Frederick the Great, who was vainer of his French verse, than of having won the Battle of Leuthen.

pings, gorgeous dresses—the whole somewhat musty, smelling slightly of a West End upholsterer's shop, but all 'gorgeous' and delightfully appropriate to the taste and times of Sir Gorgius Midas. We not only accept cranky intensity for intellectual power, and seek intellectual animation in the society of histrionic mediocrities; but because a manager gave £200 for a curtain or carpet, we blandly take it for granted that such silliness is a proof of artistic taste. We admire our theatres being turned into Tottenham Court Road musty repositories, and smile at the Romans when we read that they dissolved precious pearls in their sauces. Last, not least, Mr Irving gives us himself—for Mr Irving is always himself—always ever and again his

very self—gorgeously attired. He gives us his legs, his timbreless voice, his histrionic gait—that gait alone which in days when actors played behind a white sheet, and only the contortions of their bodies were visible, would have secured him a fortune. But that is not all, for once the admiring appetite of the British public roused, it is not easily satisfied. It cries aloud for more ; and Mr Irving sees that it gets it. For that purpose the monthly magazines are as if sent by Providence ; so, notwithstanding the loving dissertations of some of the most acute of English and German minds over the meaning of our immortal bard's writings, Mr Irving evidently thinks we are still longing or waiting for his intellectual grasp of Shakespeare's characters

and intentions, and lets us have it! *Tant pis* if it does not agree with us, he knows what he can trust to the powers of the thistle digesting animal! Yes, Mr Irving is a great man in our time; for are not the Rothschilds great men too? And what can be greater than a great knowledge of human nature—is not the world ruled by it? And when a man, who might have been a great statesman — for he is intellectual, hard-working, daring, and cunning; or a great judge—for he is sufficiently pompous and self-impressed; when such a man succeeds to get himself accepted as the actor of the day, though nature had imperatively said unto him, ‘You may be almost anything, but I deny you the necessary attributes of an actor: grace,

bearing, voice, and other physical advantages ;' when such a man, notwithstanding all, succeeds in being proclaimed the greatest living English actor, he is more than a great actor—he is a great man ! To be able to play on the strings of human gush and hysteria, and to be able to bring out over and over again the refrain :

Shakespeare may be Allah, but
Irving is the true prophet

is indeed a consummation before which most achievements of individual prowess sink into nothingness.

If we succeed what matters it, whether we have always been sincere or whether we have truckled to that arch-fiend cant, or even stooped to practise some of his cunning ourselves ? We succeed, and

nothing succeeds like success. When we bear down upon the American public and are somewhat nervous whether we shall find among it the grave or the apotheosis of our dazzling reputation, what matters it, if we appeal to the fair play of our American kinsmen and cantingly ask for the same reception and appreciation we ourselves accorded to their greater actor, Edwin Booth! What should we have thought if we had had the same reception meted out to us in America Edwin Booth received in England? But there was no fear of that in Yankee-land, though it would not have been the first time the over-strung nerves of our American cousins had nearly given way in digesting the mental fodder we now and

again so kindly send them for their dollars: witness Matthew Arnold. Nor would it have been the first time that American generosity meant weakness, if not partial blindness. But then, the Americans are a chivalrous people; they bow down before woman, or rather, before a 'lady,' wherever they 'fix' the distinction; and was not Irving associated with that matchless queen of hysterical emotion—that skin and bone passion exponentrix who tears men's souls to tatters? Added to all that, had not Lord Derby himself condescended to wish 'God speed' to the successful Shakespeare exponent! Had not the mercurial gentleman who avowed he owed everything to Mr Gladstone, who avowed he was a radical, who

writes he has never even seen Miss Anderson; who told the Americans who were the greatest Englishmen and the greatest Americans: had not the Lord Chief Justice of England himself called out o'er the housetops to the Americans: 'We send you the best we have; we send you Henry Irving.' Special correspondents, quack medicine vendors, bagmen and sandwich-men all, where are you? Cast in the shade by the Lord Chief Justice of England! Hysteria, gush, and lunacy, where are you drifting us to? Let us get out of this night and see if we cannot find out where common-sense has got to.

Now that we have seen Mr Irving fairly on his way to America, let us cast a casual glance at his peculiarities as an actor. In

looking through some criticisms of the style of this man, whose success is so prominent a feature of our fetish worship in art matters, we read amongst other items that many great actors, notably Kemble and Macready had, like Mr Irving, a small mimetic faculty. But that does not say that their inflexibility of countenance—let alone of manner—was so distressing as Mr Irving's is. If Kemble or Macready could not easily transmute their individuality, at least their individuality was not one that forbade them to play some of the most conspicuous parts in our dramatic repertoire, on pain of offending us by their angular ugliness and incongruity. What Mr Irving's adherent individuality is composed of, is shown by the fact that he is

only really good in parts like Louis XI and the hero of 'The Bells,' where, with all his mannerisms, he looks and plays the character to a T. In fact his mannerisms being essentially hideous, add to the illusion. In all his other parts it is ever and again the hopeless attempt of Louis XI, or the burgomaster in 'The Bells,' or if you like, Mr Irving trying to get out of his skin. Only where his dreadful individuality has been in harmony with the character he portrays, has success been legitimate. And yet we have this eminent tragedian, like our other eminent tragedians, ever playing the leading part, however unsuited the individuality of the actor may be to it. In Germany I have seen the greatest tragedian of his day, Bogumil Dawison,

play quite a subordinate part in Schiller's 'Maid of Orleans,' because it was the part best suited to him in the play; although he only appeared once on the stage and that only for a short time. But such submission to discipline, to unity of ensemble is unknown with our histrionic stars; they must remain stars or nothing; that is to say perpetually and solely shining stars; and to insure that the better, they seem to take care to surround themselves with nonentities, so as to shine forth all the better from a dark background of mediocrity. Unity of design and performance go for nothing, except it be now and then the hopeless unity of mediocrity in the unavoidable absence of a star, even of fifth magnitude. In Germany Richard Wagner

knew how to 'assimilate' stars and annihilate starlike pretensions, which he boldly declared to be inimical to the unity of a drama. But we are not living in an atmosphere favourable to bold declarations of policy.

Some foreign criticisms on Mr Irving as an actor might have been deemed sufficient to open the eyes of the delirious multitude, who fondly fancy they are worshippers at the altar of 'high art' (a term unknown in any other tongue), when they are merely being juggled by a melo-dramatic actor. Now, notwithstanding all the clamour of popular applause, amidst the disquisitions of fortnightly and monthly reviews, of analytical dissertations and anxious appreciation of Mr Irving, I have humbly held to the

opinion that he might be a great money-making genius, a great feeler of the cranky popular pulse; but that as a great actor he is a sham, except as an exponent of East End melodrama, in which I first saw him. I have clung to this opinion amidst some discouragement, for this man seemed to have the power of calling forth a certain catching mania, which influenced even those not easily mentally affected.

We have still got to get rid of a certain amount of cant in order to grapple with the usual fallacy that, success alone is the proof of excellence. Our experience in art matters points rather the other way. Now, though we may never be able to get the multitude to see through the glamour of success and decide calmly for itself whether it is meritori-

cious or not, we may be allowed to point out that if the popular taste is vicious, and popularity evanescent and contradictory, then also the success of the hour is not enough to excuse us for bowing down to the Fetish Worship of the present time.

In reviewing such a state of things it is but right to pause and ask in common fairness, where does the action of one man and consequently his direct responsibility cease, and where do the influences of our time begin, that make such vagaries possible? Are we only to blame an impulsive, though doubtless well-meaning, Lord Chief Justice? Are we to be too hard upon a poor struggling actor, who taking the tide at the flood, as we all endeavour to do, succeeds in leading on to fortune, and in the process

loses his balance? Most decidedly not; if we worship Henry Irving as a histrionic phoenix and take *au sérieux* a Gushington for a Lord Chief Justice, we have only ourselves to thank; for we made both possible. It is not too bold to assert, that under more normal conditions of public taste, the one would most likely still be a respectable melo-dramatic actor and the other by his post-prandial vagaries almost impossible as Lord Chief Justice of England, unless dignity has ceased to be a necessary adjunct of such an exalted position.

But we are working our way through a period of social and artistic gush and hysteria; we are in a state of mental and moral transition, out of which we can but devoutly hope to come in a healthier

frame of mind, at least as far as the cultivation of the fine arts is concerned. Hitherto our cultivation of the fine arts, be it architecture, the drama, music, or painting, has often enough been the subject of ridicule amongst the cultured few. Our weaknesses in art and other matters have been cruelly satirized, not by foreigners, but by our own most eminent sons. And over and over again we have felt the sting and recognised the likeness in the glass held up to us.

The vagabonds of old have become the perfect gentlemen of to-day, though it might be a matter of opinion whether a broken-down or poor unfortunate actor is not nearer the type of vagrancy than the generality of prosperous actors are to the

type of perfect gentility, Still the one is as illogical as the other, for, as we are but the necessary result of the conditions of our being, how is it possible that actors, much less actresses, should be able to pass through the many struggles of their profession which involve class feeling, vulgar associations, intrigue, envy, jealousy, vanity in its grossest forms, and yet be supposed to come out scathless as gentlemen : the very conception of refinement of heart and mind ? It is, perhaps, given to a very few to do so ; but as a general rule the idea is simply preposterous ; almost as preposterous as the supposition of the average ' lady ' of the stage coming unhurt out of influences the very reverse of those that go to make up our ideal of what a woman should be :

shunning publicity, and being the centre of a domestic home. That exceptional women do go through even more, and remain ideals of what womanhood should be, is all the more to be wondered at, and they to be admired.

From being tolerated in society, actors have latterly come to be *fêted* as its lions; for our gushing, hysterical society will have lions, even if they have to make shift with the ass in the lion's skin! A glorious instance of our incapacity to keep to a golden medium in our judgment as in our actions, and with the usual result of making ourselves ridiculous in the eyes of sober men. Up to a recent period, an Englishman boldly set up as a schoolmaster and taught the budding mind to shoot, after

having failed as a pork butcher or sausage maker. So now-a-days a man has but to fail in the pulpit, at the bar, in the army, in the navy or at the desk, to take to the boards and to appear over night before us as a duly qualified pupil of Thalia. Whether he can enunciate three words consecutively, whether he can stand straight without putting his hands in his pockets—in fact, whether he is more than a tailor's walking advertisement—is not a matter of much importance, for can he not often get up the tree of his profession without ever being called upon to exercise any of the qualifications of a real actor? Many of the plays of the present day are mainly played by carefully dressed men and women for the delectation of the equally well-tailored men and

women of the average English middle class. What more need be said? The scenes are mostly enacted in drawing-rooms, where to loll about and sit boldly on chairs and tables are the principal qualifications of an actor; to blurt out a few common-place jerky phrases to a bevy of awkward and vulgar women, the most that is expected. For if the average of our actresses were not so dreadfully vulgar, why should we always hear it as such superlative praise that this or that actress is graceful, natural and lady-like? things that every actress, even of the humblest parts, is expected to be in France as a matter of course. But then they are artists, and our gentlemanly actors and actresses are mostly raw artisans. This

observation applies particularly to the fashionable London theatres. But it is of these we are principally bound to treat from the moment it must be admitted, that their influence is more than local—it is almost national. Not only do our country cousins flock up to town and witness a successful play, but it is invariably transferred to the provinces later on, and it then becomes a *fait accompli* of Fetish Worship from one end of the kingdom to the other.

We make each other believe we think independently on politics, notwithstanding the guiding influence of our leviathan London press; but I have yet to learn that we possess hypocrisy enough to assert that our tastes in the fine arts are not blindly led by the fashion of the metropolis.

Of many of our provincial theatres it is impossible to think without being reminded of a pig-stye, and as for the performances themselves, the less said the better. Melodrama and low comedy alone call for a word of recognition; for even in the dirty pens usually at the disposal of country managers, they are never quite despicable as dramatic performances. As already stated, we are not without national dramatic talent; and we show it in sensational melodrama and low comedy; but these are patronised by the masses, and their exponents spring from the masses, which have never been deficient in natural talent, if somewhat uncouth in their tastes. But where are they to refine their tastes? Surely not at the theatres that are frequented by the better classes. Better

let them retain their sense of genuine humour, if coarse and somewhat vulgar, than imitate the gentlemanly inanity of their so-called betters. The splendid names of English actors of bygone days are one more proof of the dramatic genius of the English people, and if we see so few outward signs of its vitality in the present day, it is less the fault of the English people than of that small section which, mainly apeing the hollowness of a certain society, succeeds in passing off its aspirations as those of the best among us. Abroad the masses flock to the high class theatres—more especially in Germany—and thus the whole community participates in an appreciation of what is best in the dramatic literature of the land, and benefits thereby. And

what a refining influence the theatre can exercise has only lately been indirectly proved in Italy, where the increase of brutality and crime amongst the lower classes has been statistically established to go hand-in-hand with the collapse of the theatres in certain towns, as already referred to. At all events the Italian Government was so convinced of the connection of cause and effect that they have determined to subventionize the theatres in question for the future. But how can we expect the community to arrive at a healthy dramatic appreciation and taste, much less be influenced for good, as long as the youth of our 'higher' classes—for with us all is aped from on high by those beneath—are trained under their present influences? How can

we expect them to have even a decent appreciation of the drama, as long as nearly all masters and professors at our universities are theologians; and when in a university town like Oxford the undergraduates have the 'theatre' (which is half-like a barn and half-like a public-house parlour) all to themselves, the respectable inhabitants of the town shunning the place in consequence of the disgraceful horse-play the undergraduates are in the habit of indulging in? On that very spot an actor, who himself had been an Oxford student, told me that he was always sure of a well-behaved audience, for using the precaution of having his former connection with the university printed on the bill, the academical youth usually refrained

from pelting him with rotten eggs. Under such conditions the youth of the most powerful aristocracy in Europe is trained to an appreciation of the modern drama!

Our London appreciation of dramatic acting for itself may be judged, not by our idols alone, but by those we have neglected. We took no account of the Meiningen troupe with Nesper and Barnay. That might be excused on the plea that they acted in a foreign tongue, were it not that London went mad over Salvini's Italian 'Othello,' only to find out a few years later, that he was after all, only a second-rate actor. Only lately Edwin Booth, who, even in a foreign tongue achieved unparalleled success in Berlin and Vienna, fell flat with us in

England in our own language. Gush, hysteria, and other taste directors, had not recommended him to the gods; nor had society happened to go mad about him, though he was more worth going mad over than half our dramatic idols put together. His success at Berlin leads the Berlin correspondent of the *Times* naively to opine, that it might encourage his English rivals to come to Berlin, too; and that, is no doubt, the expression of a feeling shared by many. If I may venture to give a piece of advice, it would be for them not to try the experiment.

Yes, the lower the ebb our stage sinks to, the more our actors rise individually to notice and affluence; the more wretched their mouthing of our classics, or the more

dreadful their drawing-room drawl in adapted French pieces, the more they distinguish themselves as men of the world. They develop before our eyes as sucking after - dinner speakers. Mr Irving at present stands unrivalled in this new departure; but others are following in the wake. Irving tells his Scotch hearers, that it was amongst them he first sat upon the little mound which has since grown to such a mountain. And his last performance in this line is to tell the Americans, that England would be pleased with his reception among them. Mr Wilson Barret tells his audience he is going to educate them. He has a moral lesson to inculcate; he has a mission. A public that tolerates this latest innovation

of actors promiscuously addressing it before the curtain, not only gives us the measure of its own value, but shows us, that it is capable of tolerating anything within the bounds of the vulgar and the ridiculous.

If times are dull we have Mr Bancroft giving a dinner to Mr Irving, and *vice versa*, with the obligato speeches of mutual admiration and indirect self-advertisement—two augurs of the gushing, rubbishy dramatic age behind the scenes. But even such masters of the art of gush and self-advertisement are liable to overdo it. * It is not long ago that Mr Irving in

* Since this is in the printers' hands, the Bancrofts have been interviewed for the benefit of 100,000 breakfasting Britons. Mrs B. opines that a girl who has presumably never felt strong passions, cannot portray them. Strange that this *aperçu* should fit in so well with Miss M. Anderson's nightly performance of 'Juliet' But professional jealousy is a thing of the past, since actors and actresses are received in good society!

an unguarded moment made an after-dinner speech at the Freemasons' Tavern, in which he showed the cloven-foot more plainly than usual. He told us he objected to the fashion of going to see amateurs act, because the public ought to appreciate professional actors, whose art was their livelihood. *Il faisait l'article.* Besides Mr Irving's objections to amateurs, his dogmatical objection to training schools for actors, as comparatively valueless, is instructive. The self-made man gives it as his dictum, that instruction in acting, presumably as in other art matters, is unnecessary. Still the transparent fallacy of such opinions surprises one less than the audacity of stating such rubbish, and the dulness of a community which

after hearing such a confession of faith, still persists in believing in its wily and audacious exponent. Quite apart from the sophism of the above, which the *Pall Mall Gazette* pointed out at the time, it is amazing to hear this gentleman tell us to 'appreciate' professional actors, when, according to the *Era*, of the 29th March, 1884, such an excellent actress as Mrs Chippendale so long and so honourably associated with the Haymarket Theatre, disheartened by managerial neglect in this country, and determined to seek fresh fields and pastures new, was leaving us for Australia. Yes; the few remaining satellites of a bygone age in which we possessed the Kembles, the Keeleys, Macready, Robson, Kean, Phelps and

many other deservedly honoured names, are neglected and forgotten and our theatres have developed into gigantic money-making machines. To work these machines successfully a second-rate troupe of chansonette singers is often more in demand than a whole constellation of actors. We crowd to hear stale Offenbachiana, partly interpreted to us by the refuse of third-rate French theatres, whose murdering of our mother tongue no other public would stand. The female parts, originally written for the unmatched type of the chansonette singing French soubrette, are 'given' in our country by brazen-faced lasses, without a suspicion of voice, musical talent, or grace. To this, and everything,

there are exceptions, but they only prove the rule.

Of our native attempts at opera bouffe it is best not to speak, except to point out how hopeless they must ever remain when even with Sullivan's * music the result is despicable. Only to think of Mr Gilbert's libretti, their vulgarity and their dreary interpretation. With 'Patience' the problem apparently impossible of sinking deeper than hitherto, was successfully solved. But that is not all. The more fashionable the audience, the more vulgar the performance. So we have performances nightly crowded

* *Apropos* of Sir Arthur Sullivan—the light of our musical world—he too has been interviewed of late for the benefit of the breakfast table, and tells us the Germans have produced nobody in music between Weber and Wagner. He tells us also we do not appreciate native talent. This comes with delightful grace from a man who gets a small fortune for each successful little sentimental song he composes.

with white shirt fronts, whose possessors are in ecstasies over the clumsy terpsichorean efforts of a raw-boned girl, whose greatest claim to popularity is, that she is said to have been seen on the knife-board of a four-in-hand, beside a real duke. If we desire to see for ourselves the debasement of public taste in dramatic matters, we have only to look in at one of our fashionable theatres, and if we wish still further to inquire why we get nothing better, we have only to look through half-a-dozen of our theatrical criticisms in the Press, and compare the superficial glib rubbish with half-a-dozen current reviews in any German provincial paper. Men like George Augustus Sala, Edmund Yates, *e tanti*

altri, as Mentors to the Parnassus!*
Ye Gods!

A recent French writer has boldly asserted that the English intellectual minority do not frequent the theatres at all. There may be exceptions to so sweeping an assertion, but it may safely be said, that if the cultured few do patronise our theatres, they have hitherto modestly refrained from publicly complaining of the mental sufferings they undergo. For a senseless play or an unbearable actor can wound our holiest feelings: the sense of the beautiful, the

* One thing Mrs Kendal has stated that does credit to her courage, and carries the conviction of truth with it, and that is: she complains that actors and actresses are absolutely forced to hold a candle to the representatives of the press. Of course there are exceptions to this; still it is an instructive side-light on the *role* of our press as an art monitor. In every case a public would be better served whose dramatic critics are not in the habit of accepting invitations to theatrical midnight suppers.

ideal; in one word, commit sacrilege on us, in the same way an Iconoclast would wound the feelings of a Catholic congregation, by defacing the pictures or statuary adorning its place of worship. And yet we have only to venture into most of our leading theatres in order to have our feelings outraged. But we must keep it to ourselves, unless we wish to be taken for barbarians by a society that has long ceased to have any honest appreciation of dramatic excellence. But independently of the short-comings of the performances in themselves, let us merely look at the local conditions of the drama in our mighty metropolis. How can we expect anybody of innate refinement of feeling to enjoy an intellectual relaxation,

if in the process, he has to wade either in a carriage or on foot through the purlieus of Drury Lane, and see the misery, dirt and degradation gauntly staring him in the face? A sight unparalleled in Europe! What can bring our tinsel finery into a stronger and more unsympathetic contrast, than this sight of the cruel misery of our poor?

The *Pall Mall Gazette* of April 14th, 1883, told us that 'Caste' was 'the one' Robertsonian comedy which might claim to be a work of solid merit, and that, except at its revival, no similar display of enthusiasm had been witnessed in the case of any English comedy since its first production in 1867. Was that success owing to the fact that no comedy has so re-

flected the class of people who went to see it, or that no troupe of actors have been so successful in catering for, and in being patronised by the very class, in which the silliness of caste feeling (and the exceptional vulgarity of our own speciality thereof) is so predominant, as the fashionable Bancroft Company?

Yes, with us the Theatre is like the Church. We have our fashionable theatres, as we have our fashionable churches, and they are by no means the best of their kind. We are a people of coteries and castes, with our one hundred and eighty-seven religious sects and our one sauce; and in our class coteries and sets we work out Darwin's law of the survival of the 'fittest' with some astonishing results.

M U S I C

THE genius of the realms of fancy seems utterly dwarfed with us in this age of stupendous scientific and abstract thought; or at all events not strong and healthy enough to free itself from the influences of gush and maudlin sentimentality. Such periods have ever preceded or followed times of great activity and struggle. With us it

is the renaissance of the upholsterer and the glorification of a water-colour strippling poet in a water-coloured age. In such an age, real imaginative genius goes wrong and we get the over-wrought sensuality of Algernon Swinburne.

Already our 'tinny' pronunciation of classic names proves us to be a race not very much gifted for the appreciation of harmony of sound. And it is not so long ago, that music was thought in these islands to be an accomplishment unsuited to a gentleman, and to be left to ladies and greasy foreigners. And now we are music mad, as we have been mad before on other things, and are pretty sure to go mad yet on more. From looking down on music as an effeminate accomplishment, we have come to-day to propose a

memorial tablet in Westminster Abbey to a deceased operatic bandmaster; for even we are hardly so far gone as to propose a corner in Westminster Abbey for Sir Michael Costa because of his compositions. It would be almost as if we were going to put Sir Frederick Leighton into our national mausoleum because he is supposed to look like a gentleman in evening dress, instead of because he is one of the fashionable painters of the hour.

We have cultivated music extensively of late and doubtless made enormous strides in its appreciation, notwithstanding the way we have gone to work about it. Has not even the *Times* lately called out referring to the successful production abroad of an English opera, 'Colomba' — that musical Germany

must look to its laurels? Besides that, have we not been importing tons and tons of cheap classical music? Have not our London musicsellers become merchant princes? Has not one of them started the most successful series of popular classical concerts on record? Has not almost every large provincial town got its own provincial local musical genius and prophet? Why certainly, and all this can only point to one conclusion, namely, to the enormously increased popularity and cultivation of music during the last two decades. Then if such be the case, why classify these facts under the heading of Fetish Worship? Because our cultivation of music is so largely mixed up with the gush and hysteria of the hour, that it is almost a question, whether the evil thereof does not weigh up somewhat of

the good, and show us some disagreeably unhealthy sides of our insular idiosyncrasies. And yet was ever a people more in want of softening, refining influences than our cold-canting, social-awkwardness-suffering community, let alone the humblest class thereof? But music by itself is not sufficient to raise a people morally; that is indirectly proved by the kingdom of Saxony, than which no country is more musical, and yet they are no better than they should be, the good Saxons. But with us, the cultivation of music never was, nor ever could be a simple outcome of our sympathetic attraction towards one of many refining influences; no, we are too thorough for that! We have been in darkness, we want light; the light of music, 'Sweetness and Light' as Matthew Arnold would say. It is no

longer a refining influence that draws us gently towards it, it is a moral force—we must rave about, for we deal in moral forces. We go crazy on the subject—a beautiful Hebraic trait of character, which the Jews themselves have long got over and relegated to us through the influence of their Old Testament. We go music mad, like the Puritans went Bible mad ; like our fathers went free-trade mad, reform mad, and left off before half the work was done ! In fact we do not take to music naturally like the duck takes to the water, but we rush at it wildly, blindly, hysterically, madly like the Tasmanian devil rushes at its foe, or the bulldog used to fasten on to the bull's snout, howling with excitement.

Where are the only so recent days, when

the public never presumed to have a musical opinion of its own, until Mr Davison, the musical critic of the *Times*, had sanctioned and directed its taste? Where are the days when Mr Davison told us to venerate in Mrs Arab. Goddard (his wife), the arch-exponent of Mendelssohn; when he told us to take Mr Hallé at his own valuation as 'the' interpreter of Beethoven; when enterprising foreigners were warned off these preserves; when Rubinstein was sent out of the country in disgust, and retired, like Achilles, sulking to his Russian tent? Where are those so recent days, and where has our didactic and dogmatic critic himself gone to, whose artless disquisitions on Mozart and Beethoven, and whose sneering anathemas on Wagner's want of melody

and on Germany's younger school were received with unctious reverence by the well-dressed multitude and acted upon as law supreme?

He is gone—at least his influence has—and hysterical gush and intensity have displaced hollow pretentiousness. Rubinstein has forgotten his wrongs, and reaped a golden harvest among us. Fortunate enough to be able to turn his back on the British public, he has reaped the reward that everybody has yet reaped who could afford to kick us—namely, the reward of our licking their feet when allowed to do so; and when that process takes the form of earning several thousand pounds in a few weeks, it is as agreeable to the passive object of

the process as it must be to the ecstatic multitude that indulges in it.

A man gives a proof indeed of his fondness for music if musicians and their worshippers in England have not succeeded in weaning him from its cultivation.

But history tarries not long over individuals; I might mention the names of many *virtuosi* who, since Mr Davison's eclipse, have come among us, been heard, and have conquered. But not only 'performers' on any single instrument have ever and anon been the subject of our enthusiasm or our neglect; we have enlarged our scope of operation, and lately given way to a peculiar *tendre* for orchestra leaders! The late Sir Michael Costa we have already referred to, and now Hans Richter of Wagnerian celebrity has

come under our notice. The *meister* himself cherished him above all others,* and doubtless embraced him with effusion on many occasions, like I once beheld him embrace that Byronic fiddler Wilhelmj. That was enough for our musical critics; it was too late to follow Mr Davison's example and try to crush a possible rival of our incomparable conductor Sir Julius Benedict; so they went to the other extreme—that is to say, down on their knees. They do not presume to criticise; it is simply an exercise *à plat ventre* and an ecstatic cry of 'perfection.' We read of 'the' Wagnerian conductor, his 'wonderful wand,' the 'marvellous ensemble,' the 'unique rendering,'

* At least our press said so, though I have since been told it was by no means the case.

and so forth *ad nauseam*. For our press has recanted, and a section of it worships Wagner now almost more slavishly than he is worshipped in Germany.

Is it not amusing to read this *unissono* of the press, presupposing a thorough mastery of a style, the value of which it had, only a short time ago been almost unanimous in denying? But we get an even more concise idea of the value of such praise, when we bear in mind how complicated Wagner's music is admitted to be, and how difficult to appreciate, even by his greatest admirers.* It is almost a life study in itself

* To prove the truth of this assertion, I may state that since this was written Herr Scaria, Wagner's favourite bass singer, frankly tells me that he (and many of his colleagues) only learnt to appreciate the 'Meistersänger' long after he had sung in that opera himself; and as for the 'Nibelungen,' he could not even now feel reconciled to many passages.

But our press began, of course, by understanding and praising that which many of Wagner's own musicians cannot appreciate even up to the present day.

and as such, hardly likely to be yet understood, much less thoroughly mastered by the generality of our musical critics, let alone by a public that has never yet heard it adequately rendered. It is true the press in Germany long refused to recognize Wagner; but that transcendent genius forced recognition in a country where gush and a narrow-sighted press are not omnipotent, and the public taste in consequence enslaved and degraded. The Germans learnt to appreciate Wagner in spite of their press;* with us the press, all of a sudden, tries to educate us up to Wagner, whilst neither it nor the public understand him.

* Wagner even defied the press when he attacked the Jews who are almost omnipotent as press critics in Germany.

But we have not to do with critical vagaries alone. Mr Manns at the Crystal Palace, the different musical societies in the metropolis and in the provinces have struck out boldly and done real honest good work in familiarising, not only our well-dressed multitude, but our humbler classes—those who are most in want of soothing influences to smoothe the rugged surface of their daily life—with something beyond our Exeter Hall culture of Handel and Haydn. To borrow again an expression of Mr Matthew Arnold, they have done something to relieve us from our dreary Puritanic ‘Hebraism,’ and mixed in a little ‘Hellenic light’ in our daily existence. Let us be thankful for that, and let us not forget to express our admiration for a man like Sir Julius Benedict, who

belonging to the old school—for he was a pupil of Weber—has yet managed to float well in front on the incoming tide, and in the age of Wagner, Brahms, Raff, Gounod and others, yet manages to get his own little nest egg, ‘The Lily of Killarney,’ and similar respectable compositions, now and then applauded by a well-dressed audience. But then Sir Julius was always a shrewd man, *persona gratissima* in good society, and marrying again when on the shady side of sixty, has managed to get the Prince of Wales to stand god-father to his infant heir. Sir Julius Benedict is like Mr Irving, who is more than a great actor—Sir Julius Benedict is more than a great musician, he is a great man.


Yes, we are well abreast in the incoming

tide of musical gush and intensity. Even the German Wagner worshippers cannot outshine us, for our enthusiasm is broader, we do not pin our faith to one composer. Besides we have more money than they, though perhaps not so much as the Americans, who lately seem to excel us, not only in our hysteria and gush, but also in the power of their purses. This is evidenced by the great singers of the day no longer going from us to look them up, but in their coming from America to give us a passing call.

Not only in the cultivation of music itself are we unique, but in our treatment of musicians, as already pointed out. The same as we would let the greatest musical genius starve, unless our press had told

us to rescue him, so we cannot control our ecstasy in lionising those that our press has once revealed to us. Our aristocracy, and particularly our upper middle-classes, do not stop at paying ridiculous prices for lessons to their talentless offspring, but invite the hungry foreigner to their family board, and provided he can torture a Broadwood, or set our nerves on edge with his Stradivarius, they do not stop to inquire what spirit's child he be, where he comes from, or what are his antecedents? If our foreign music-master thereupon takes the tide at the flood, and hammers or scrapes himself into the affections of our only daughter, we have only ourselves to thank for it. For although the Germans are so mighty

in music, that the world could almost afford to do without the works of any six non-German composers combined, sooner than lose any one of Germany's first six musical names, still that is no reason we should bow down to the legions of seedy and pretentious music-masters Germany supplies us with. Now, if we were to invite creative genius and treat it as an equal, that would be a different thing; but to treat the often often half-educated and invariably arrogant piano strummer or violin scraper as a lion, is thoroughly ridiculous, or rather thoroughly vulgar middle-class English. And why do we not patronize creative genius in the Fine Arts? Because artistic genius shuns us, we do not inspire it; our aristocracy is powerless to nurture it, and



our middle classes kill it outright. A composer, a painter of the first class can do with our money, but if he is 'really' worth his salt, he can even do without that, for thank goodness, the time is long past when true genius was reduced to seek the patronage of our ruling classes. Second-rate artistic stuff only, takes up its permanent abode with us. Honest plodding, hard-working stuff, but not inspired genius. Our sky is not a suitable canopy for it. It never was, and since the steel age, it is even less so than before. Therefore we are forced not to be too particular, and thus we call almost everything an artist, from a comic singer down to a mechanic, who can throw a whitening brush at a signboard. As a consequence we put up

And

with almost any vagaries and vanities of 'artists' in our Fetish Worship. We used to applaud Mario when he hadn't a note left in his throat. But quite apart from the liberties curly-headed foreigners take with us, we put up with a man like Sims Reeves, although he now and then is unavoidably prevented from keeping his engagements, and although he too has hardly a note left of his splendid voice.

Musicians are a funny lot all the world over, the emotional character of their profession is answerable for that; but other communities are not quite so indulgent to them as we are. Now and then the continental papers make us acquainted with the vulgarities of a Herr von Bülow, or the senile fatuities of an Abbé Liszt: but then

the same number invariably relates the proper treatment the former has received in return, or the pity the latter has earned for his weaknesses. Not so with us: our well dressed multitudes hurrying into St James' Hall with earnest though wooden features, rather like to be humbugged and they now and then get what they like. Let anybody who thinks this statement exaggerated take the trouble to look in at one of our London classical concerts and watch the intensely earnest crowd turning over the pages of their little book programmes simultaneously and reading the letterpress: eagerly following the descriptions of the music they are hearing, how one part is put down as an imitation of the village church bells, or peasant's dance, or

what not *ad nauseam*. If he be not then convinced, that our cultivation of music is largely impregnated with our insular idiosyncrasies, nothing will convince him. And all this fed and led by our press ! Now we have doubtless many reasons to be proud of our press ; we are told to be so often enough, but that it assists us to a healthy cultivation of the Fine Arts, not even its greatest panegyrist would care to assert. Only lately the *Times* blandly informed us that Millöcker's 'Beggar Student' was devoid of melody, after it had, not only been performed hundreds of nights running at both Vienna and Berlin, but whilst military bands and public concert gardens were nightly and endlessly reproducing its charming melodies all over Germany and Austria. And the

Times proved in this instance, as in so many, to be the oracle of our taste, its indicator and director. The 'Beggar Student' went begging with us. At least our public was spared the failure of encoring at the wrong moment: a mistake arising from a want of appreciation, which is almost a rule with us when applauding instrumental or vocal performances. For even if the Covent Garden orchestra happen to be in the midst of one of Beethoven's most divine inspirations or not, that will not deter our enthusiastic middle-classes from giving vent to their spontaneous appreciation of the difficulties of a *flauto obbligato*, or of some unimportant technical adjunct, that happens to tickle their fancy. We have invented those little abominations, the

descriptive concert programmes. Why not go a step further and insert in the letterpress directions when to applaud, when to sit still, and, above all, how to avoid turning over the programme leaves simultaneously and noisily?

PAINTING

Not only our aristocracy, but our plutocracy and our upper-middle class, with its fringe of pretentious vulgarity, all unite in patronizing the Fine Arts. That is done in a somewhat promiscuous manner, but in no branch of the Fine Arts with more blind Fetish Worship than in the art of painting.

Our aldermen have their portraits painted

and hung on the line at the Academy ; our merchant princes have their daughters painted ; our sporting squires get their horses and dogs painted, and now and then a groom, or a jockey, or a stable boy. They must do something to patronize the Fine Arts, and they do even more than that, they generally manage to spoil every man of talent that rises above the horizon of mediocrity.

We do not enjoy a picture gallery like normal educated beings ; we rush to the Academy like a herd of famished cattle rushes to the banks of a cooling river. We must see the pictures and be seen looking at them, like we must be seen in the Park and at church. The only difference : our admiration of painting is not so narrowly bigotted as our faith in certain

subtleties of a religious creed : our admiration is spontaneous, hysterical, and gushingly *intense*. We are not particular : landscape, the figure, nude or draped, or cattle that we have never seen in the flesh, it is all the same—all is grist that comes to the mill of our promiscuous admiration. We only ask to be told beforehand by some authority—best of all, by some social power—what to admire ; we are waiting for it, we long for it, like Lady Caroline Lamb longed to see Byron, saying, ‘ I must see him, even if he is as ugly as Esop ! ’

Yesterday the Prince of Wales innocently drew attention to a picture by a lady, ‘ The Roll Call,’ and to-day the rushing herd have to be kept off by a posse of policemen. The rush to lick a shrine

among Catholics is child's play to it. We must give the Prince of Wales the credit, that he has not publicly expressed a marked predilection for any one picture since: being good-natured he is naturally disinclined to be the innocent cause of a crush like that at the funeral of the Duke of Wellington, when several people were crushed to death.

Our daily press has in this, as in so many other matters a deal to answer for. Unfortunately in this age of compromises it is not fashionable in politics alone to be satisfied with half measures; and it has perhaps brought partly with it the fear of an outspoken opinion we meet with in art criticism. To read the average press notices of our picture galleries is to read concoctions, the

prime object of which is often to conceal the author's ignorance, instead of enlightening and directing the taste of the reader. And when the critic is not ignorant and gushing laudation impossible, then faint praise takes the place of honest, outspoken condemnation. We who appoint a man, who has grown wealthy as an enterprising trader, to be our First Lord of the Admiralty; we, who before now made a lordly partisan our Postmaster-General, in one word pitch-fork men into the superior command of departments they were hitherto totally unacquainted with, for the grasp of which they have had absolutely no previous training: we make an exception in art; we appoint a painter to preside over the Royal Academy. And with what result? In

what instance has an organ of the press ever boldly taken up a position against the gross favouritism rampant among the Royal Academicians? When the last president of the Royal Academy, Sir Francis Grant, died, one or two press organs timidly expressed a faint hope, that the scandal of each Academician being privileged to exhibit eight pictures might fall into abeyance with a new nomination. When Frederick Leighton succeeded as President of the Academy, the press were in ecstasies at the happy selection. Mr Leighton had mixed in good society, he was a good speaker, he looked genteel in evening dress. What more could be asked? And as for the remedy of scandalous abuses, why, how could a man who had learnt

manners in aristocratic drawing-rooms, help discarding a privilege that is absolutely vulgar in its selfishness. And what was the result of it all? Eight pictures of Sir Frederick Leighton graced the walls of the first Academy he presided over, and we have had Sir Frederick Leighton ever since!

It is characteristic, that the English art worshipping public can hardly approach anything artistic without defiling it; or rather, no sooner is its influence thoroughly felt, than the inevitable result follows—vulgarisation and deterioration. As soon as our painters reach the envied distinction of R.A., or even A.R.A., which brings them into the full glare of indiscriminate public recognition, the mischief is done,

they begin to 'go stale' to deteriorate. Compare Millais, Marcus Stone, and many others to-day with what they were before they had come to bask in the sun of popular appreciation. It is consoling to hear on good authority, that Mr Millais does not despair of English art; bearing in mind his position in our art world, it would have indeed been surprising to hear a contrary opinion from him. Now, if prosperity and fulsome flattery make our painters careless and slovenly, not to say vulgar, the public critical appreciation of their work will certainly not draw them up to a higher level. For once a reputation started, the appreciation of the crowd is caught up from its surroundings out of a *pot-pourri* of what it hears and

reads, and consequently admires in all blind faith and fidelity. In the meantime, we shall probably continue to do our best to ruin the younger generation of talent among us; let us hope we may not succeed. But we cannot alter our character, nor yet in a day, change the conditions of thought of the time we live in—always the same crazy, cranky extremes, either spoiling adulation or cold killing neglect. Millais gets £2000 for a talented daub of a family portrait group, and Haydon starves. The old story, St James and St Giles in close proximity: no golden middle path can we wander in art, or in other matters.

What a blessed feeling it is for the true lover of art for its intrinsic beauty and worth only, that with all their comparative

poverty, foreign nations are after all, public spirited enough to keep up the prices of the work of their greatest painters and thus dispense them from coming to seek their bread among us. Thus we have it that hardly any single foreign painter of first-rate ability troubles us with his presence. The prices paid abroad for Fortuny, Meissonnier, and several other painters' work, go beyond anything Landseer ever touched during his life, or Millais has ever reached, and do not represent a meretricious craze, like the prices paid for the latter's latest daubs. Also in Germany, men like Defregger, Lenbach, and others, find munificent patrons and high prices, almost equal to our utmost extravagance. What a blessing the Bonnats, Héberts,

Fortunys, Lenbachs, and Achenbachs are not reduced to accept commissions to paint our beef-eaters, our aldermen, our masters of foxhounds, our aristocratic, angular, hard-featured countesses, and our pet cat and dogs! We have vulgarity enough staring us in the face from our Academy walls, what would be the case if we had the power of vulgarizing half the talent of Europe? As it is, thanks to a merciful Providence, we can only prostitute our national talent and vulgarize ourselves among ourselves. Enough of the day is the evil thereof, and that we can thankfully exclaim at the thought of our power for spoiling the Fine Arts being at least strictly limited to these islands; we

have but to take a ticket to Calais or Ostende to get beyond it.

But we try hard to do more than ruin the artistic talent and genius of our own country. We try, and generally succeed in spoiling every first-rate talent our wealth may have temporarily attracted to our shores. We either kill with our neglect or intoxicate and spoil with our intense and indiscriminate worship. It happens that people among us pay thousands for pictures, who can scarcely tell an oil painting from a chromo-lithograph, whilst paintings of fair artistic merit are given away at auction rooms, for the public does not exist to prize a fair article at a fair price, or buy it on its own judgment. Only the other day it was truly stated, that a work of art is worth exactly as much as

any fool may be found to give for it. We produce a speciality of these fools. Nowhere are extremes so marked. A painter asks £500 for his picture, and if he does not succeed in getting it, he may be unable to get 500 pence for it. But if he once gets £500 for a picture, that will ensure him selling many another picture, be they ever such daubs, at fancy prices. Can he not point to being the painter whose picture at the Academy fetched £500? And that is enough for most of us. Whether the said picture was bought by some vulgar parvenu, who could not tell the difference between a chromo and a water colour or oil painting, we do not stop to ask; we blindly reason thus: (if our lethargic thinking crowd can be considered capable of reasoning at all

on these matters) if he sold one picture at £500, surely his others are worth something approximate to it: perhaps more, for 'they' say he is a rising man. Hence our artistic mushroom reputations; our going up like a rocket and coming down like a stick; our want of appreciation of what is good, by any canon evolved out of an inner consciousness, and thus our only measure of excellence is often the hysterical character of surrounding influences.

For many reasons the art of painting is a sickly plant in this otherwise so fertile country. Puritanism has made too sweeping a havoc of what it found in its time, and hypocrisy allied to dulness of mind do their best, or worst, to perpetuate a state of things which the more enlightened among us have

some time since pronounced intolerable any longer. Educated Englishmen, when they come in contact with the general culture of art which prevails in some parts of the Continent notice, that there it is largely a matter of *délassement* and enjoyment for all classes. In this country, barring a number of conspicuous exceptions, it is a 'corvée' for the half-educated bulk of the middle-classes, and a mockery for those to whom it is not made palatable by spurious additions of melodramatic interest and unsound sentiment. It is very praiseworthy that the frantic attempts which have been made of late years to popularize art have been mainly suggested by a wish to lift the masses out of the mire of the past, instead of being a spontaneous result of the love of the beautiful for its own sake.

This, however, explains in a great measure its superficiality and artificiality as we find it in the present day. Honesty of purpose is not sufficient by itself to secure a satisfactory result in the Fine Arts. Still, with regard to painting it would be too much to assert that the circumstances under which an English born artist enters his career, are in themselves altogether unfavourable to a satisfactory development of his natural talents. The worst influences he has to contend against are the unhealthy tastes of prevailing fashion, which under our peculiar social system are so powerful as to neutralize and often misdirect a healthy leaning in a young artist. It seems that with us, in art matters, as well as in many others, the principle of self-help unduly forces a man to overcome the pressure of ini-

mical influences instead of his being assisted by congenial ones. The law of the 'Survival of the Fittest' is worked out among us under more than average stringent conditions. Now, whatever an artist's talents may be, he is bound to conform here as elsewhere to the result of one question—will it sell?

From the moment that we are forced to admit that what will sell, is in many cases not what is good, but rather what is craved for by a cranky fashion—from that moment we have an explanation why talent and training are not sufficient by themselves to secure the advancement of healthy art. Therein lies, in a large measure, the explanation of the inferiority of our artists to those foreigners who now and then send their pictures to our foreign galleries. It

is not that we are devoid of talent, but rather that our public taste tends to spoil what talent we produce. The immortal Turner sought inspiration in Italy and Germany, and returned to his native land only to seek a refuge in drink from the want of congenial surroundings. Haydon in despair shot himself; and many others of our greatest painters have led a life of misery and died before their time. Each instance carrying with it an accusation and condemnation of a public, that pays now ridiculous prices for the work of a dead man, whom it was unable to appreciate when appreciation could have benefited him.

*This man evidently does not
know a good painting from a
bad one. or he would never
say that painting is a fine art.
but that it is a mere mechanical
work now and then a little more*

CONCLUSION

I do not mean these sweeping assertions to convey that I am ignorant or regardless of the many instances of individual taste in all artistic matters in our midst. All I contend is, that individuals, however numerous, are only individuals, and are powerless to alter the character and tastes of the community at large. The most they

can do is, to mark the contrast all the more. The power of fashion in an overcrowded and excited daily life, a public mind largely devoid of imaginative power and classical and historical association of ideas is not the one to favour art culture, though it be never so practical, plucky, and pushing. That in the incessant struggle waged by all classes for the advancement of their material interests, true considerations for beauty and harmony must necessarily be thrust into the background is but natural.

Our feeling for allegory begins and ends with Bunyan's 'Pilgrims Progress,' and our popular historical characters, such as Henry VIII, Queen Elizabeth, Mary Queen of Scots, Mr Dick's Royal Martyr, Nelson, Wellington, and lastly Garibaldi, have not

been able to fire our artists to produce works of immortal renown. The stores of mythology—for instance the charming myth of Eros and Psyche—are to nine-tenths of the people either a sealed book or equivocal tales.

What nature has denied to our race in playful lightness of fancy, it has made up for by endowing us with exceptional energy and courage. Now if we take two grains of fancy, two of taste, and one of pluck as a good mixture for any painter's mental capital to be composed of, we may venture to infer that not a few contributors to our Royal Academy are possessed of too ample a share of pluck, whilst at the same time sadly deficient of the two other mental ingredients. Now, whatever may be the

value of undaunted effort from a moral point of view, in the playful realms of art it is inadequate by itself, as we too often see. That however our earnestness, our energy and above all the knowledge of our present deficiencies will ultimately tend to bring us to a higher level, no man can deny who is acquainted with the splendid qualities inherent in our race. But it requires no prophet to foretell that, before that comes to pass, we shall have accepted and shall live by other standards and ideals. In the spontaneous admiration of our masses for great-heartedness, energy, courage, and every form of human excellence — if only they were trained up to distinguish between the real and the sham—lies a strong hope for the future. Also in the love of nature,

which is almost innate in the humblest born, we can find another hope for a fairer and truer appreciation of art, as well as for everything that is noble and worthy of admiration in the world we live in. But the half-hearted way we have hitherto allowed our masses to participate in the enjoyment of influences, that ought to be within the reach of all, has, whilst showing their capacities for improvement, only shown us the more clearly the hopeless darkness they have hitherto dwelt in, as well as the miserable inadequacy of our attempts to raise them. Letting them look at God's nature on a Sabbath, as a charity forsooth; or anxiously admitting them into a few Fine Art Galleries, and affecting surprise that they behaved themselves! That is

not the way to raise the standard of our people; they must have a right to look at those blessings in art and nature, that were never intended to be shut out from them. Ideals instilled from above have shown themselves powerless to affect those below for good; hence the hope of the future must rest in the new and healthy influence starting from the broad base of the fabric, penetrating and permeating the unhealthy elements above. You cannot affect the masses—in whom our future hopes be—by elegant twaddle, as Matthew Arnold has abundantly shown, not by his written precepts only; but by his clumsy and artificial rhetorical attempts.* We shall

* Our Oxford oracle of Ethics has since shown that want of tact in the east end of London among the poor that he displayed on several occasions among the well-dressed Americans.

require stronger medicine, but men like him are not qualified to prescribe it.

But these reflections carry me away from the subject of these pages, which I think I cannot better conclude than by casting a glance at our latest popular attempt at Fetish Worship—namely, the sudden excessive admiration of female beauty, as ministered to us by the aid of the latest born art, that of the photographer. Now, is not the admiration of female beauty distinctly within the true artistic instinct? If so, what are we to say to our beauty worship and, *par conséquent*, to our artistic instinct, or that of our press,* which hallows and panders to our instincts?

* It is amusing to behold our Society papers pointing to the vulgarity of our tastes, when they have done their utmost to vulgarize everything for us. Our professional beauty craze is cotemporary with, and a direct creation of, our so-called Society papers.

We live in a country renowned throughout the world for the beauty of its women and yet our shop windows have been filled with the photographs of common-place faces which we have hysterically accepted as our standards of beauty. It is true a reaction has lately set in by the worship, for once, of a truly beautiful woman ; but can that make up for the list of expressionless faces and sticks we have been burning incense to for so long ?

If, as is more than likely, our truly beautiful daughters shun the photographer's lens as well as the shop-windows, then why not recognize the fact and give up the hysterical attempts to prostrate ourselves before the rubbishy ideal of the hour ? For we ought to be able to do so all the more readily, as we

possess among us the fairest types of female beauty in the world, if only gush and intensity would leave us the discrimination to recollect it. But no, we are not only weaned from the worship of what we really do possess worth worshipping, but our very standards are distorted for us. For have we not lately taken to worship hysterical *intensity* for true intellectuality? And now an entire new current of taste bids us bow down not only before what is diseased in a literary and artistic sense, but forces us in fact to accept new standards of beauty, at variance with all accepted canons. Although our classical female beauties perhaps bored us with their expressionless features, surely there was no necessity to become excited and so *intense*, that we need have taken refuge in the admira-

tion of consumptive eyes, lantern jaws, and agonizingly wide mouths. Our time has created a type of beauty of its own; something dyspeptic and painfully attenuated, which we fondly call intellectual. Surely our old types were not so borishly inane as to excuse us drifting into such a diseased extreme. But we have partly done so, as many of our types of excellence prove to-day in the flesh. We wanted expression, and with our usual 'thoroughness,' we were determined to get it and bow down before it, even if it be the expression of agony.

When we pass from the subject of expression to the mere admiration of plastic form and figure, we find the state of our taste less pronounced, and our conversion

thereto less violent and sudden, for we never had much discrimination in these things and cared presumably less. We have ever shown a greater appreciation for the outline of a horse or a dog, than for the shape of the human form divine. Therefore, in accepting a woman as a beauty, whose thinness and angularity reminds us of a cross between a towel-horse and a skeleton key, we are not so much subject to any sudden fit, we simply knew no better.

But enough of our Fetish Worship ; our attempts to spoil the Fine Arts, and degrade the standards by which alone it is possible to live cleanly. It is to be hoped they are but transitory, and that we are steering towards a fairer future. For at all times truth has had its eclipses, and only shone

